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Senate passes Sen. Cassis' "Good Builders" legislation

LANSING—The Senate today unanimously passed bills sponsored by Sen. Nancy Cassis that will protect and advance the professionalism, ethics and integrity of the residential building industry while giving consumers greater confidence and security in those they hire.

Senate Bills 631 and 632, known as the "Good Builders" legislation, will provide several mechanisms to strengthen the industry.

"With this legislation, Michigan becomes a leader in protecting the reputation of licensed builders and strongly deterring those who fail to get their licenses, who could face enforcement by way of fines, penalties and even jail time for substandard scamming of the public," said Cassis, R-Nov.

The bills give the state the authority to go after unlicensed builders. The legislation also creates the Builder Enforcement Fund in the Michigan Department of Treasury. Each licensee will pay a \$30 one-time fee to this fund for the purpose of prosecuting unlicensed builder activity. After startup of the fund, civil fines collected from prosecuting unlicensed builders will continue to fund this program.

Builders convicted of a misdemeanor enacted by the legislation could face up to a year in jail, and second offenses are punishable by up to two years in jail. A third offense is a felony, with a penalty of up to four years in jail. The bills also provide for civil fines up to \$25,000. In addition, the legislation:

- Requires that all licensees have continuing education for the first six years after initial licensure. Should a violation occur the department could require up to 18 hours of continuing education from the builder;
- Creates a residential builders' and maintenance and alteration contractors' board;
- Requires the Department of Treasury to post on its website any complaints against licensees within 30 days after the determination by the board; and
- Requires the department to post annually on its website the number of final orders.

"Significantly, these bills provide confidence to the consumer that the person they hire to build or remodel the largest investment they will probably ever make in their lives—their homes—will live up to the standards of contract integrity and first-rate workmanship," said Cassis.

Lee Schwartz, Michigan Association of Home Builders executive vice president for government relations, endorsed the legislation.

"These are important bills, and we were pleased to work with Senator Cassis on them," said Schwartz. "They will help protect consumers against unscrupulous builders, while rewarding and strengthening the professionalism of the honest, good builders and remodelers in the industry."

The legislation now moves to the House for consideration.

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